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Submitted by Joan Nichols, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

**Testimony on: HB 5295 AN ACT CONCERNING AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION**

*Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA) is a non-profit membership organization representing nearly 2,500 farming families in the state of Connecticut.*

Senator Cohen, Representative Gresko, Senator Derek, Representative Palm, Senator Minor, Representative Harding, and members of the Environment Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 5295. This testimony is particularly focused on Section 2 and Section 3 of this bill.

**Section 2:** Connecticut Farm Bureau has long supported the work of the [Governor's Council for Agricultural Development](#). (GCAD). CFBA staff and farmer members held Council positions and were involved in numerous working groups. The Council has not met since 2018.

CFBA strongly supports reinvigorating the Council and suggests the following changes to the proposed amendments:

Subsection (a): Governor's Council for Agricultural Development and Innovation. This retains the focus of Agricultural Development while recognizing the need to address Agricultural Innovation. The GCAD should be maintained as an independent advisory council for which the Council was originally intended and not reconfigured for administrative purposes under a state agency and therefore, we oppose this change. We appreciate and support inclusion of the director(s) (strike chairperson) of Connecticut Farm Bureau and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station as co-vice-chairpersons. The dedicated Council positions representing a cross-section of the agricultural community and stakeholders should remain unchanged and not amended. We do not support the removal of dedicated positions.

Subsections (b) and (c): We support the proposed amendments to this section to allow for the broader expansion of the work of the Council.

**Section3:** The potential subdivision of future agricultural land easements held by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture is a significant and fundamental change to the current program and a complex issue.

Should the agency want to pursue this proposal in the future, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association would support a study and task force to explore the potential for future subdivision of agricultural easements working in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board, farmers, farmland owners, funding partners and stakeholders.

CFBA supports other tools for providing land access for new and beginning farmers as well as existing farmers such as the Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) and Buy-Protect-Sell.

**Sections 1,4,5 and 6:** CFBA supports Sections 1,4,5 and 6 of HB 5295.

I welcome further discussion on these proposals and options to help new and existing Connecticut farmers with land access and profitability: [joann@cfba.org](mailto:joann@cfba.org) Cell: (860) 951-2791.